Subject: Issues related to Gtac's stormwater permit application of 2013-07-09
From: "john.coleman" <jcoleman@glifwc.org>
Date: 7/29/2013 9:21 AM
To: bradleya.johnson@wisconsin.gov, "Lynch, Lawrence J - DNR" <Lawrence.Lynch@Wisconsin.gov>
CC: "Sande, William M MVP" <William.M.Sande@usace.army.mil>

Brad and Larry,

Here, and attached, are some initial comments on Gtac's application for a general constructions site stormwater permit dated 2013-07-09. The work is proposed exclusively for the road along the RR grade on the north facing slope, which was identified as Access Road #3 in the Gtac's exploration permit applications this spring.The 4 primary activities proposed are:

1. Installation of 4 culverts, at least 1 (at 16+60) of which are in wetlands and a culvert at 42+80 in a water of the U.S. (stream87).
2. Ditching along the edge of the road. Exact location is unclear but is associated with culverts, some of which are in streams and wetlands.
3. Construction of sediment sumps (.pdf page 13) some of which are in wetlands (culvert at 16+60, pdf page 14,).
4. Creation of a berm along the edge of the road (pdf page 13 and 15) with material scraped from the road surface.

Proposed use of the access road:

Access Road #3 was identified and used in Gtac's exploration applications of May 9 and May 16, 2013 and a large portion of that same road is identified as an access road in Gtac's Bulk Sampling Plan of 2013-06-17. Gtac appears to have submitted the stormwater permit application of 2013-07-09 independently of the Bulk Sampling Plan. Throughout the stormwater permit application Gtac identifies the RR grade as an Access Road but fails to identify any significant use other than that identified in its Bulk Sampling Plan of 2013-06-17. Regardless of any short term light use, the primary use of the road will be for Bulk Sampling and the road base and stormwater controls must be designed for such use.

Lack of adequate identification of wetlands and surface waters:

Because Gtac's wetland delineation has not been provided, it is impossible to determine if more than 1 culvert is in wetlands. We believe that the culvert at 25+45 may also be in a wetland. We believe that the culvert at 42+80 (texts says 42+95) is to be installed in a water of the U.S. (i.e. stream87). The construction of sediment sumps (80 cubic foot capacity Sedimentation Sump, pdf page 13) at the entrance to the culverts would represent excavation of a wetland and stream87. The general permit (section 3.1.5.8), that Gtac is applying for, states that "locations where storm water is discharged to a surface water or wetland within one-quarter mile downstream of the construction site." must be identified. The map provided does not show all wetlands and surface waters within 1/4 mile downstream. Given the nearby wetlands, the ERW and trout stream downstream, accurate mapping is important.

Lack of specificity in current and future road dimensions:

The lack of specificity in existing or future road footprint makes it difficult to understand potential impacts to wetlands and other waters of the U.S. Gtac indicates that the road is currently an average of 14.7 feet wide (2.02 acres divided by 6,000 foot road length = 14.7 foot width). Given the road's current narrow footprint, it seems implausible that creation of a berm with existing road material can be done without increasing the road footprint. This would result in a fill of wetlands and other waters of the U.S.

Lack of a Construction Site Erosion Control Plan or Storm Water Management Plan:

The application contains a checklist of activities that might be implemented but provides no site specific information. Nowhere in the application is there detail that would indicate compliance with the requirements of the general permit to ensure non-degredation of the downstream ERW or meet wetland water quality standards associated with a trout stream.

Stormwater discharge points need to be identified:

The stormwater permit application does not identify how precipitation will be removed from the road bed. Berming of the road, as proposed, will aggravate the already poor drainage from the road bed. The 2.02 acres of road bed has the potential to accumulate substantial precipitation. Clearly, exits from the roadbed for accumulated water must be made, yet non have been identified.

Components needed in order to protect wetland and surface water quality:

1. More emphasis on prevention of erosion rather than sediment containment. Erosion control is supposed to be a standard part of a stormwater plan. Flow length controls need to be installed. The road surface needs to be stabilized to minimize erosion. Simply removing sediment from the road surface may not provide an adequately stabilized road base. The permit should require that if a firm road base is not exposed by scraping the existing surface, appropriate aggregate will be placed.
2. Vehicle access should be restricted during wet periods so that erosion is not aggravated.
3. Structures to cause discharge of stormwater from the road into uplands, rather than into wetlands or surface waters, should be required.
4. Access Road 3 (the RR grade) is not the only road that needs improvement in order to adequately control erosion and runoff. The steep slopes on Access Road #1 at its western terminus near Ballou Creek and its eastern terminus near stream20 have eroded substantially during exploration activity.
5. Precipitation on the road must exit through the proposed berm.These exits for road runoff must be clarified so that the location of discharges can be identified.
6. Wetlands and surface waters within 1/4 mile of the site need to be better identified so that adequate protections can be implemented.
7. The current and future road dimensions need to be specified. Engineering drawings need to be provided for the length of the road project.
8. Baseline information needs to be developed on the downstream ERW and monitoring required in the permit to ensure that water quality is not degraded.
9. An individual permit is needed. Stormwater needs special attention at this site because water discharges directly to wetlands, discharges to a tributary of an ERW (Javorsky Creek), and discharges to a tributary of a trout stream and associated wetlands. According to NR 103, a discharge to a wetland can not adversely impact wetland functional values. With a general permit, there is no way to determine if the ERW, trout stream and wetlands are adequately protected.

Given that stormwaters at the proposed site discharge to a tributary of an ERW, a tributary of a trout stream and directly into wetlands, a general permit is not appropriate for this project and an individual permit should be required. Additional erosion controls and stormwater treatment, such as in-road flow control, settling ponds and infiltration basins must be implemented to ensure that water quality of the ERW is not degraded and water quality of wetlands, particularly wetlands associated with the trout stream tributary is fully maintained. During exploration activities, Gtac demonstrated an inability to protect wetlands and waters of the U.S. from excessive sedimentation. Only through an individual permit that requires specific protections for non-degredation waters, trout streams and wetland water quality can the project adequately protect natural resources.

I look forward to further discussion of this proposed project.
john

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John Coleman, Madison Office of the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission
U.W.-Madison Land Information and Computer Graphics Facility
550 Babcock Drive, Room B102
Madison, WI 53706
608-263-2873 or 265-5639
jcoleman@glifwc.org